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Bal Gangadhar Tilak

HIS LIFE & CAREER

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BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

HIS LIFE AND CAREER

At other times and in other countries, the hero of this biography would have occupied one of the most honoured places in the temple of scholarship, and would have enriched the reputation of his land for deep erudition and unwearied industry by works of surpassing merit and originality. But the Gods decreed otherwise, and one who was born to adorn the arts of peace and culture has been dragged from the learned seclusion of his study and plunged into the vortex of politics, with the inevitable fate awaiting all those who work for the better ordering of the affairs of their country. His life possesses all the materials for a political romance. Starting life with the light of the unclouded Sun shining on his path, he has lived to see the shadows engthening and the storm raging around him. But during all this period of incessant activity, he has never for one moment faltered in the course pointed out to him by the hand of destiny and the impulse of his own passionate nature. No figure in modern Indian politics rouses such contradictory emotions as Mr. Tilak. To the Indian belonging to his own political party, he is the hero who is to be followed implicitly. To the Indian of the opposite political school, he is the very incarnation of misguided activity and unalloyed selfishness. Friend and foe alike confess that he is an extraordinary man whose personality contains the magic charm of drawing

round him the enthusiastic admiration of thousands. We shall see how it is that he has been able to build this fair fabric of popularity, which, in spite of reproach and contempt, has risen higher and higher.

He was born at Ratnagiri on 23rd July, 1856, and his ancestors had distinguished themselves in Mahratta history. He had in his father, Mr. Gangadhar Ramchandra Tilak, a man of great ability and learning who was at first an Assistant Teacher at Ratnagiri, and then Deputy Educational Inspector at Thana and Poona. The son inherited from his father his love of teaching and mathematical powers. The death of the father in 1872 left the son at the age of 16 without the help and solicitude which a father alone knows how to shew towards the child of his affection. After passing the Entrance Examination, he joined the Deccan College from which he graduated with honours in 1876. He then took to the study of law and obtained the L. L. B. degree in 1879. It was at this most impressionable period when dreams of goodness float in the mind of youth that Mr. Tilak came into contact with Mr. Agarkar, and the two young men resolved to abjure all desire for Government service, and matured a plan for the establishment of a School and College to impart cheap education. The two enthusiastic workers met with no encouragement in the beginning, but they found at last in Mr. Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar, a man of similar aspirations and the most famous Marathi prose writer of the day, a sympathetic comrade. The Poona new English School was ushered into existence on 2nd January 1880 by Messrs. Tilak, Chiplunkar and M. B. Namjoshi who were before the close of the year strengthened by the

addition of Mr. V.S. Apte, M.A., and Mr. Agarkar, M.A. The Maratha Pandavas, as they might be fitly called, had energy left in them for the starting of two newspapers, the "Mahratta" and the "Kesari", which were printed at the Arya Bhushan Press, established by Mr. Chiplunkar. The conductors of the infant journals had soon to taste the consequences of unflinching criticism. They boldly criticised the action of the Kharbhari of the state of Kolhapur for the treatment accorded to H. H. Shivaji Rao, the Maharaja. During the course of the prosecution for defamation against the papers, Mr. Chiplunkar died, and Mr. Tilak and Mr. Agarkar were found guilty and sentenced to simple imprisonment for four months. This is the first of the prosecutions to which Mr. Tilak was subjected.

Messrs. Tilak and Namjoshi continued their patriotic labours, and, in 1884, the Deccan Education Society of Poona was formed. Later on, Professor V. B. Kelkar, Professor Dharap, Professor M.S. Gole joined forces with them, and, in 1885, the famous Fergusson College was brought into existence under the fostering care of the Deccan Education Society. Mr. Tilak's participation in the work of the School and College lasted only till 1890 when he resigned his connection. It would serve no useful purpose to discuss the various causes of this rupture. Suffice it to say that Mr. Tilak was of opinion that the life members of the College should confine their attention to their work as teachers, and that, as the other members did not take the same views, he was obliged to part with his friends. Nothing but praise is due to Mr. Tilak for the work that he did as Professor of Mathematics, Sanskrit and Science, and it may be imagined how a man of his versatility and

vigour of mind would have been able to stamp upon his students the indelible marks of his personality.

In 1888, Mr. Agarkar gave up his connection with the "Kesari" on account of differences of opinion on social and religious matters, and the two papers vested in Mr. Tilak, Mr. Kelkar and Mr. H. N. Gokhale. As Professor Kelkar could not continue his connection with the papers, Mr. Tilak became the sole editor of both; and later on, a partition was effected by which Mr. Tilak obtained the proprietorship of the "Kesari" and the "Mahratta," and Messrs. Kelkar and Gokhale retained the ownership of the Arya Bhushan Press. It is well known how these two Poona papers have attracted the attention of the public, and how the "Kesari" rivals any other paper in circulation and the width of its influence, as an organ of public opinion, representing the Radical party in Indian politics.

Mr. Tilak took a leading part in the controversy in regard to the Age of Consent Bill, and his opposition to the Bill was based not on any real conflict of principle but on his firm conviction that the autonomy of Hindu Society should not be disturbed by any Government legislation but by spontaneous movement from within its own pale. The bitterness engendered by this agitation led to the division of the cultured section of the people of Poona into the Conservative and Liberal parties, and the angry feelings that were then aroused are, we believe, still mouldering in the minds of the Social Reformers who have never allowed an opportunity to pass by without attacking Mr. Tilak, a very lamentable fact which is quite characteristic of the violence of the Reformer against all those who have the hardihood to question the validity of his proceedings. While engaged in public work, he was also

in charge of a Law Class, the first institution in the Presidency, for the purpose of equipping young men for law examinations.

About this period, he gave the time that he could spare from the work of a Law-lecturer and an editior to the study of the antiquity of the Vedas. He pursued an entirely original line of research, and succeeded in establishing his reputation as a scholar of great solidity and independence of thought. He sent a summary containing his contributions to the elucidations of the antiquity of the Vedas as proved by astronomical observations to the International Congress of Orientals, which met in London in 1892. He subsequently published the whole paper in the form of a treatise, entitled 'The Orion,' or 'Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas.' It is not necessary to go into a discussion of the line of reasoning adopted in this book, for it is too technical and elaborate; but it is enough to say that he strove to convince the thinking world that the authorship of the hymns of the Rigveda dates before the year 4000 B. C. This publication met with deserved applause from European scholars of such eminence as MaxMuller, Weber, Jacobi and Whitney. He carried on a learned discussion with some of them, and, in 1894, Professor Whitney gave to Mr. Tilak the highest praise in an article in the Journal of the American Oriental Society, and Dr. Bloomfield, of John Hopkins University, referred in a University lecture to Mr. Tilak in the highest terms as a scholar who "impressed him with something leonine in the way in which the author controlled the Vedic literature and the occidential works on the subject."

We have again to revert to an exciting public event in which he figured conspicuously, viz., the prosecution

of Rao Sahib N. S. Bapat of the Settlement Department of the State of Baroda on a number of charges of corruption. As the accused was one of his personal friends, he threw himself heart and soul into the defence and acquitted himself in a manner which well sustains the belief that, if he had only persevered in his profession as a lawyer, he would have by this time most probably been elevated to the Bench of the High Court. His advocacy of the cause of a friend like this officer of a Native State is one of the many instances of his generous friendship and of his zeal in any cause which endangered the safety and reputation of any one who reposed confidence in him.

His interest in politics led him to associate himself with the Indian National Congress, and he was the Secretary of its Deccan Standing Committee for some years. He organised the first five sessions of the Bombay Provincial Conference, the last of which, held at Poona under the presidency of the Hon. Mr. P. M. Mehta, was a brilliant success. The Bombay Hindu-Mahomedan riots engaged his mind at the time and his adverse criticism of the acts of officials was not at all gratifying to the Government, as he maintained in the columns of his paper that the "Divide and Rule" policy was mainly responsible for all this tension between the two communities. He was twice elected to the Bombay Legislative Council and also a Fellow of the Bombay University. He also established his fame as a Municipal Councillor of Poona when he was returned as a Member of the Municipality at the head of the poll in 1895.

Mr. Tilak's position as regards social reform has been regarded by his opponents as arising merely from a base ambition to win cheap notoriety. It is

indeed a melancholy fact that the motive of such a man as Mr. Tilak should have been exposed to misconstruction, but his theory and practice are not so ambiguous as to lead any one who is not merely blinded by "apriori" notions to take up the attitude that Mr. Tilak was actuated by anything else than a sincere desire to serve the highest interests of his country, even as the Social Reformers who are happily of the sanguine constitution which makes them reserve all love of country to themselves. His position on questions of Sociology was that reform must proceed on lines that have been laid down in the Shastras and must be conducted not in a spirit of vainglorious hostility to ancient institutions but in a spirit which is thoroughly cognisant of the sanctity of the past. His reverence for the past was not based upon a silly conceit of its superiority but upon a solemn conviction that, however poor the past might appear to us in the present, any healthy nationality and manhood could only arise from a robust faith. His conservatism was not like that of the Theosophical School intended to minister to the arrogance and laudation of power but to serve as the impetus for self-respect and self-reliance. The past was the inspiration of the patriot and not the clammy hand of death paralysing spontaneous and wild energy and subjecting the growing national consciousness to the caprice of aspiring adventurers. The spirit of scepticism which Mr. Tilak found in educated men could not but be thoroughly distasteful to him as savouring more of ignorance and levity than of profound meditation and a reverential spirit. How could such men, he asked, men living in an effeminate atmosphere of unbelief and enervation, be fit for the work of reforming the ancient frame work of our land? Mr. Tilak has put his own

beliefs into practice by educating his daughters and postponing their marriage till the limit fixed by the Shastras was passed. Last year, at the Ganapathi festival in Poona, he made a pronouncement on the caste system which came as a revelation to many who were under the impression that he was the most orthodox champion of the superiority of one caste over another. But he dissipated this misconception when he declared that the divisions of the caste system were not mutually hostile classes but were merely based upon a division of labour. Just as the legs cannot claim superiority over the hands, so one caste cannot say that it is higher than another. All the various parts contribute to the health and life of the social organism. In 1895, he was chosen the Secretary of the Poona Congress, the eleventh National Congress Sessions. But party differences arose among the Congressmen of Poona about the holding of the Social Conference in the Congress Pandal, and Mr. Tilak retired from the work, although he continued to assist in the successful holding of the Congress Sessions.

It was in the severe famine that broke out in the Presidency in 1896 that Mr. Tilak shewed his love of the common people which accounts for his astonishing popularity with them. In Poona, he brought into existence cheap grain shops which averted disturbances. The suffering of the people of Sholapur and Nagar took him to the spot where he matured a system of relief works in co-operation with the Government. But unfortunately, it was believed by the Bombay officials that the agitation carried on by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was the work of Mr. Tilak, and therefore his scheme was not accepted. It is a very sad circumstance that only at the beginning of the present year the Temperance

movement in Poona received a very cold reception from the Government, and it may be guessed that officials regarded Mr. Tilak's participation in it as suspicious and fraught with evil consequences. Mr. Tilak did render valuable service when plague made its first appearance in Poona; and he remained on the spot, while a good many of the fair weather politicians had fled in panic, and organised a hospital and in his paper recommended to the people the salutary measures of the Government for the stamping out of the plague, but all his solicitude for the good of the people and his sincere desire to work with the Government in the suppression of the plague did not shield him against the wrath of the authorities.

Mr. Tilak recognised that hero-worship or "bound less admiration" as Carlyle calls it, was a strong incentive for national zeal, and he found in Sivaji, the great Mahratta chief and warrior, a historic personality capable of rousing the dormant energies of his people. With a laudable desire like that of Lord Curzon for perpetuating the memory of Clive, he started a movement for repairing the tomb of Sivaji at Raigher and for celebrating annually the Sivaji Day. As plague was raging in Maharashtra at the time, the celebration of the year, 1897, took place not on Sivaji's birth-day, but on his coronation day which was the 13th June. There was an imposing ceremonial accompanied by singing and preaching, and on the 18th June a report of the proceedings, with a hymn sung on the occasion, was published in the "Kesari." The murder of Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst on the 22nd June which produced panic in the Anglo-Indian community, was regarded as the outcome of the article in the "Kesari" and the Government of Bombay gave sanction to the

Oriental Translator, Mr. Big, to institute proceedings against Mr. Tilak for sedition. Mr. Tilak was arrested in Bombay and not in Poona on 27th June in the night, and brought before the Chief Presidency Magistrate who refused an application for bail. The High Court was moved, but refused to release Mr. Tilak on bail. On the 2nd August, Mr. Tilak was committed to stand his trial at the High Court Sessions, and a second application for bail was made to Mr. Justice Tyabji by Mr. Davar (afterwards Judge) which was opposed by the Government. But Mr. Justice Tyabji released Mr. Tilak on bail, and in his order expounded the law in the light of the principles governing the action of Criminal Courts in England. The defence was conducted in the High Court by Mr. Pugh, of the Calcutta Bar, assisted by Mr. (then Justice) late Davar, while the prosecution was in the hands of the Advocate-General. A Jury consisting of six Europeans and three Indians was empanelled, and Mr. Tilak was found guilty by the six European majority. The Judge accepted the verdict and sentenced him to eighteen month's rigorous imprisonment. The application to reserve some points of law to the Full Bench was refused, and of course the Advocate-General who had conducted the prosecution could not be expected to stultify himself by the grant of a certificate. The High Court of Bombay followed suit and refused special leave to appeal to the Privy Council. The last resource left to the defence was tried by moving the Privy Council to grant leave, and Mr. Asquith, lately Prime-Minister, argued the case; but the Lord Chancellor, Lord Halsbury, saw no occasion for interfering with the verdict of the Lower Court and rejected the application. It may be worth while mentioning the fact that the Chancellor was a Member of the Cabinet

of which the Secretary of State for India who had sanctioned the prosecution was a member. The highest Court of Appeal having refused to reconsider the case on the merits, the friends of Mr. Tilak in England, Professor MaxMuller and Mr. William Hunter, presented a petition to the Queen, and prayed for mercy as he was a great scholar and as his release would be taken as an act of the exercise of the prerogative which was worthy of the Sovereign. After some negotiations, Mr. Tilak was released on the 6th September 1898 on his giving his consent to certain formal conditions.

The next six months were passed by Mr. Tilak at the Singhad Sanitarium where he recovered somewhat the health that had been considerably impaired by his prison-life. After attending the Congress held in Madras, he travelled to Ceylon. In 1900, the celebration of Sivaji's birth-day took place in the Raygad Hill Fort, and this annual function has become a recognised part of the great national events of our country, filling the young with enthusiastic visions and the old with great memories of a not inglorious past.

In the midst of all his public activities, he found time to devote to the study of the antiquity of the Vedas; and, during a period of ten years, he gradually mastered not only the original works but the western treatises on the subject. As he continued his researches, the conclusion was slowly forced upon his mind that the original home of the Vedic-Singers was in the Arctic region and that the ancient hymns date from interglacial times. In his former book, the 'Orion,' he had invoked the assistance of astronomical observations to establish the antiquity of the Vedic compositions, and in this treatise he pressed into service the latest discoveries in Geology and the most recent information about the condition of the

primitive man. It is by a daring and independent combination of diverse materials gathered during a prolonged course of investigation extending even to the time when he was put in a prison that he has been enabled to come to his theory which has extorted the admiration of European and American Orientalists. The book was published in March 1903, and found a ready acceptance in all intellectual circles. Mr. Tilak himself says that he did not start with any preconceived notion in favour of the Arctic theory; he regarded it as highly improbable at first, but the accumalating evidence in its support eventually forced him to accept it. Such an authority as Dr. F. W. Warren, the Principal of Boston University, passed a high eulogium on the work and remarked that "absolute candour and respect for the strictest methods of historical and scientific investigation characterise the discussion throughout." It is, indeed, a gratifying thing to be told by a great American scholar that, among Indians who are taunted with the lack of the historic and scientific faculties, Mr. Tilak is one who does full homage to the accepted canons of historical and scientific criticism and analysis.

It is, indeed, a melancholy task to turn from the contemplation of Tilak the scholar, to Tilak struggling with difficulties arising from prosecution. The famous Tai Maharaj case involved him in mental and physical irritation which, to a man of his temperament, was more unbearable than any trouble caused by a State prosecution for sedition. Shri Baba Maharaja, a first-class Sardar of Poona and a member of one of the oldest aristocratic families of the Deccan, was on the point of death when he sent for Mr. Tilak who had been only a few days before released from the prison. As Mr. Tilak was a great friend of the Maharaja and as he was sincerely

desirous of promoting the prosperity of the family, he was induced to accept the heavy responsibility of an executor under the last will and testament of the dying man.

This benevolent compliance with the last wishes of a personal friend was the cause of all the storm that raged over his devoted head from 1901 to 1904. Mr. Tilak, with his usual thoroughness, set about bringing order into the chaos in which the estate of the late Maharaja was left; and for the real stability of the family, he determined to do two things, viz., the payment of the debts and the putting of widow on a shorter allowance than she had expected, and the adoption of a boy. The young widow did not at first raise any opposition to the scheme but the evil counsellors who surrounded the young and rich widow, played upon her fear and suspicion till she imagined that she would be in a better position if she were allowed to adopt a boy of her own choice who could be bound by any conditions that she might choose to impose. So gradually the conspirators, including her favourite Karbhari, drew the net round her, but till the 18th June 1901, the misguided widow did not manifest any signs of hostility towards the executors. On that day they all set out for Aurangabad where a boy chosen from another branch of the old family was given in adoption to Tai Maharaja. When she returned from Aurangabad, she listened to the evil suggestions of her counsellor and instituted proceedings before Mr. Aston, District Judge of Poona, for revocation of the probate of the will of her late husband. The District Judge found that the probate granted to Mr. Tilak and other executors was invalid and passed an order revoking the probate, but not content to strictly confine himself to this main issue in the case, he allowed

at his unrestricted discretion much irrelevant evidence as to the confinement of Tai Maharaj, the Aurangabad adoption, etc., against which Mr. Tilak protested in vain. The evident object of all this was to damage Mr. Tilak's reputation for integrity in the public estimation; and to accomplish this ungracious purpose, the District Judge took proceedings under the Criminal Procedure Code and committed Mr. Tilak to the Poona Magistrate to be proceeded against 'according to law. A formidable list of seven charges including corruption, perjury and forgery were formulated against Mr. Tilak, and although the High Court set aside the judgment of the Lower Court on the issue of revocation of the probate, they did not think it fit to stop the criminal proceedings against Mr. Tilak, which resulted in conviction and a sentence to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment. The Sessions Judge in appeal, Mr. Lucas, reduced the sentence to six months. The Judge was of opinion that Mr. Tilak's character was absolutely untainted by any corrupt intentions. After this remark, the High Court could not uphold the conviction at all, and quashed it and the Government withdrew the other charges. Mr. Tilak emerged from this furious ordeal of prolonged misery triumphant without a blemish on his character. The Judgment of the High Court in the Criminal Case dealt with the question of adoption and pronounced in its favour, and Mr. Tilak obtained afterwards a civil decree recognising the validity of the adoption.

The last stage of Mr. Tilak's life has now been reached, and from the year 1905 onwards we find him incessantly occupied in political activities of varied nature. The year 1905 is an eventful year in the annals of British rule in India. It saw the Partition of

Bengal, effected by that most imperious of Viceroys, Lord Curzon. This crowning act of indiscretion of the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon has roused the resentment of the whole country. It began in Bengal in the open manifestation of the Swadeshi and Boycott and spread from province to province, evoking the dormant consciousness of national life. The force of the new movement has not yet abated, and those who are keenly watching the trend of political sentiments in India know that it has penetrated too deeply to be easily eradicated by a mere policy of repression, inaugurated apparently for the repression of local outburst and misguided patriotism. The broad stream of the new movement is not to be identified with Congress fiascos and prosecutions for sedition. These are the mere ripples on the surface which betoken the transformation now vigorously in progress in the land.

Mr. Tilak saw in the agitation against the Partition of Bengal a grand opportunity for the growth of the Reform movement. The agitation against the Partition revealed the essential imperfection of what has been fitly termed "the mendicant policy." Mr. Tilak had been till 1905 identified with the policy of petition, prayer and protest. With his shrewd political insight, he recognised the fact that a new departure should be made in the methods of the old political work. In spite of the fact that he is to-day the ablest and most sagacious exponent of what has been called "The New Party," he is still under the dominion of the old spirit. As Mr. Nevinson says in his new book on India, Mr. Tilak is still regarded by many of the more impatient spirits of the New Party as "touched with the modest caution of the past." The Bengal Nationalists who have made complete severance with the British

Connection, as one of the planks of their political propagandism, are unable to reconcile themselves to the fact that Mr. Tilak has all along declared emphatically that he was content with Swaraj as prevailing in the Self-Governing Colonies of Great Britain; and all thoughtful Nationalists are really of the opinion that it is merely futile to create a split in the Congress party on account of a difference in the political conception of our goal which is not so much a matter for discussion as for aspiration. From the point of view of real political reconstruction, the colonial form of Government is as effective and inspiring an objective as complete autonomy, only with this difference that the preaching of complete autonomy would bring you under the famous section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code, whereas the colonial formula can take shelter under the protecting wings of the High Court of Calcutta which has pronounced through Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Mitter that the above-mentioned aspiration and the preaching of it are perfectly legitimate for an Indian subject of His Majesty. Besides, the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy and the organs supporting it are not blind enough to be taken in by the object and aims of the Allahabad conventionists. But the reason of the reluctance of the Nationalists to sign the so-called creed of the Moderates is that they object to the imposition of any creed which has not been approved of by the open Congress. They contend that a score of Moderates have no right to force any political dose down the throat of the people of the land and, if they have any regard to constitutionality of which they boast they have a monopoly, they would admit the sweet reasonableness of the Nationalists. They are prepared to subscribe to the creed or to any

political formula if they could only be made to feel that they are not forced to do it by a handful of men whose motive may be above suspicion but whose attitude is more characteristic of the Anglo-Indian officialdom than of reformers.

It was in the Congress of 1905 which was held under the presidency of Mr. Gokhale at Benares that the boycott was declared a lawful weapon to be used by the Congress as an effective protest against a political wrong which the authorities are not desirous of redressing in compliance with popular agitation and opinion. Since the boycott movement was inaugurated in Bengal, a new political tone has been, as it were, infused into the nation. Mr. Tilak has been a consistent and fearless supporter of the boycott, holding that it is essential for the development of indigenous industries. So long as the Government are not prepared to raise a protective wall of tariff, he said, round our young industries, so long would it be required.

The vagaries of Sir B. Fuller in East Bengal, the cradle of the new movement, rapidly accelerated the growth of it, so that, at the end of the year 1906, before the National Congress met at Calcutta, Babu Bepin Chandra Pal went about the country supporting Mr. Tilak for the presidentship. The Moderates were alarmed at the idea of a Congress under the management of Mr. Tilak, and in hot haste announced that Mr. Dadabhai would preside over its deliberations. Of course, the agitation in favour of Mr. Tilak instantaneously subsided when the Grand Old Man's name was mentioned, and it is well known how, under the presidency of the veteran of eighty and two years, the Congress which was threatened with a split was conducted safely and how the boycott resolution became the

subject of an animated controversy within the Congress, and how Mr. Tilak proposed an amendment which declared the legitimacy of the boycott that was inaugurated in Bengal, and how the Gospel of Swaraj was proclaimed as the ideal to be kept in view by the younger generation of Indian politicians. It is not at all necessary that the history of the Calcutta Congress and its now famous resolutions on Swaraj, Boycott, Swadeshi, and National education should here be repeated with all its exciting details. The deliberations of the Calcutta Congress form the high water mark of the Indian National Congress. The next year 1907 saw an attempt which was a retrograde step and against which the Nationalists protested under the astute guidance of Mr. Tilak and which resulted in the break-up of the Surat Congress. The unfortunate squabbles at Nagpur last year led to the change of the venue of the Congress to Surat, which was deemed to be a place too remote to be reached by the machinations of Mr. Tilak and his party. But Mr. Tilak was not to be hoodwinked, and a few days before the Congress met, he opened his campaign in the Nationalists' Conference with Mr. Arabindo Ghose in the chair. The tactical move that was then adopted was that they should oppose the election of the President if the Congress authorities at Surat were not prepared to give an undertaking that they would retain the four resolutions of the Calcutta Congress intact. This move was rendered necessary because there were evident indications that an attempt would be made to tamper with the Calcutta resolutions which were of an avowedly nationalistic character. If the Reception Committee had no intention of omitting or materially altering them, they could have satisfied the impatient Nationalists with

an assurance of their bona fides. But the Moderates at Surat from beginning to end treated the overtures of the Nationalists with undisguised contempt which exasperated to a high degree the fiery spirits among them. Clearly it was the case of two mad bulls meeting each other on a narrow plank over a turbulent stream, and neither of them giving way but both perishing in the waters after a brief struggle. The impartial historian of the Congress will have to confess that the first day's proceedings in which Babu Surendranath Bannerjee was howled down by the Nationalists were thoroughly discreditable to them and would have really grieved the heart of the Bengal patriot who has grown old in the service of his Motherland. There was absolutely no justification for this except some story of his having invited the Police to the Midnapore Conference in Bengal. But if the first day's events were a disgrace to the Nationalists, the second day's disturbance and suspension of the Congress "sine die" were equally disgraceful to the Moderates and were plainly to be attributed to their obstinacy which could not allow Mr. Tilak to move an amendment for an adjournment of the Congress of which previous notice had been sent to the Chairman of the Reception Committee. It is contended on behalf of the Moderates that Mr. Tilak was quite wrong in moving to the platform to propose an amendment but no one who has any knowledge of public meetings can deny his right to move an amendment in the open Congress. But if the moderates had not been entirely misled by hatred against which they preach with the unction of a Saint, they would have permitted Mr. Tilak to move the amendment for the adjournment of the House and they could have waited with coolness the result,for it was sure to be rejected by the Moderate

majority in the National Congress. It is needless to narrate in this connection how the determined attitude of Mr. Tilak on the platform to make himself heard was followed by a demonstration of physical force against him and how the Nationalists rushed to the platforms for his protection with uplifted sticks, and how a free fight ensued in which a Poona shoe figured conspicuously. It is hoped that this battle of the Greeks and the Trojans will produce an epic written by a future Indain Homer who will do poetic justice to the two parties, and the various incidents of that memorable day when the Congress broke up in confusion and disaster on the sacred banks of the Tapti. Then the Moderates assembled and incubated the Allahabad Convention for framing a constitution for the Congress in the future, as though they had any right to do so, being only a part of the National Congress of 1907. The Nationalists met again and a Committee was formed for the purpose of reviving the Congress on the old lines in consultation with the Moderate leaders. Then the Congress men returned home and a bitter controversy began to rage over the devoted head of Mr. Tilak which would have overwhelmed, as Mr. Macnicol of Poona said, any other politician than Mr. Tilak whose reputation was based upon the foundation of the people's genuine admiration for the man's undaunted courage. In 1908, he was one of those who took part in the Temperance Movement and the Poona Municipal elections in which his personality held the palm of victory. The Bombay Provincial Conference held at Dhulia was attended by Mr. Tilak. No sooner had the hot controversy regarding the break-up of the Congress began to subside in violence, than the Bomb outrages at Murzafurpore towards the end of April electrified the

whole of India as an unexpected event in the political history of India. The District Magistrate of Dacca was shot at by some un- known person or persons only a couple of days before the Congress Session at Surat. The attempt made on the life of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and the life of the Mayor of Chandernagore, all these and other events led to the adoption of a vigorous policy of repression of the Nationalists. Prosecutions for sedition became the order of the day, and the most barbarous sentences have been passed on the unfortunate Editors of newspapers and public speakers. It was, of course, well known that the tallest poppy in the field would also be felled down by the Government scythe. The Bombay Legislative Council met at Poona on the 20th June 1908, when the Governor made a declaration that the Government were determined upon putting down seditious agitators in the province who were in the habit of exciting disaffection against the authorities ; and it was, of course, understood who was the real object of the Government's solicitude in the matter. Already a number of Indian newspapers were being prosecuted for sedition. Mr. Tilak as the most potent journalist in the Deccan could not be left out of the kind consideration of the Government. Mr. Paranjpe, a friend of Mr. Tilak, had been committed to the Bombay Sessions for seditious writing in his paper, the "Kal," and Mr. Tilak left Poona for Bombay to be near the scene of the trial to give necessary help in the course of the trial. On the 23rd June, the official sanction for the prosecution of Mr. Tilak was given, and, on the 24th June, he was arrested at 6 P. M. under a warrant issued by the Chief Presidency Magistrate at Sardar Graha.

On the very same day, his house and office at Poona as well as his residence at the hill fort Sanitarium, Singhharh, were searched under a warrant issued by the Chief Presidency Magistrate. A postcard containing the name of two books on explosive written on it was found, and, as we shall presently see, the prosecution made much of this card in the course of the trial. On the 28th June, Mr. Tilak was brought before the Magistrate who remanded him to custody after rejecting an application for bail. While Mr. Tilak was in Jail, the Government thought that one article was not strong enough to secure conviction and gave sanction to prosecute for another article on the 9th June in the "Kesari;" and the new warrant was served on Mr. Tilak in the Jail. On the 29th June, Mr. Aston committed Mr. Tilak to the Sessions of the Bombay High Court on two sets of charges under 124-A and 153-A by two separate orders of commitment. Mr. Tilak was lodged in the Dongri Jail at Bombay, and could not make such adequate preparation for his defence as he would have done if he had been released on bail. Mr. Jinnah, Barrister-at-Law, made before Mr. Justice Davar, the Judge presiding over the third Criminal Sessions, an application for bail, and it was refused on the ground that Mr. Tyabji's exposition of the law of bail was not quite correct and that there were other circumstances which it would be wise under the circumstances not to mention. The Prosecution applied for a special Jury and carried the point, although Mr. Baptista contended that it would be unfair to do so, as a majority on the Special Jury list were Europeans who could not understand the language in which the incriminating articles were written.

On the 13th July began the memorable State trial which will hereafter take a prominent place among the State trials in which the liberty of the Indian Press was at stake. The question of the amalgamation of the charges took up a considerable time, and as many as three charges (one under 153 for the first article, and two under 124-A and 153-A for the second article) were joined together, to the prejudice of Mr. Tilak who, conducting his own defence, pointed out that it was against the express provision of the Criminal Procedure Code and against his own interests. A Special Jury consisting of seven Europeans and two Parsees was empanelled, thus realising the fear entertained by the accused. The prosecution occuiped two days and a half, 'and the only witness who was cross-examined was Mr. Joshi, not the Official Translator responsible for the translation of the offending articles. Mr. Tilak's cross-examination shewed that the translations were not accurate and conveyed a thoroughly wrong impression of the tone of the articles that he had written. The postcard was admitted as evidence in spite of the objection taken to it, and seven other articles were also admitted as evidence to shew the animus of the accused. Mr. Tilak put in a bundle of papers found along with the postcard to shew the character of the circumstances in which it was found, and this was deemed sufficient to deprive him of the right of reply which is important to an accused in a trial by Jury. Mr. Tilak, therefore, put in a number of extracts from newspapers and speeches with the object of convincing the Jury that his articles formed part of a controversy in the Press of the country, both Indian and Anglo-Indian.

Mr. Tilak began his defence on the third day of the trial at 4 P. M. and ended on the eighth and the last

day. He spoke for twenty and one hour and ten minutes, as Mr. Justice Davar remarked in his charge to the Jury. The speech of Mr. Tilak is not characterised by eloquence, but it is a sober and dignified and stately defence of the liberty of the Press in the country. His speech dealt with the misjoinder of charges, the incorrectness of the official translations, the admission of the postcard and other articles as evidence to prove his intention,and last with the interpretation of the law of sedition, the circumstances of the reform controversy in this country, and the functions and responsibility of the Jury as guardians of the liberty of the Press. He pointed out that the intention was not a simple one and could not be presumed according to the maxim of the Civil law but must be deduced from the surrounding facts and the motives of the writer of the articles. He desired the Jury to eleminate from their minds the fact that he held political opinions with which they were not in accord and that he was not a "personagrata" with the Government. He did not sue for mercy at their hands but merely asked them to do justice to him as a man, remembering the historic traditions of the Jury in-England and their guardianship of the freedom of speech and writings.

Mr. Tilak concluded his address to the Jury at about 12-30 noon on the last day, and, after the Advocate-General had replied in a way that was not a fair answer to any of the arguments so elaborately put forth by the illustrious accused, the Judge delivered his charge to the Jury by sitting up till 10 P.M. A majority of seven returned a verdict of guilty and the Judge, accepting it, sentenced Mr. Tilak to six years' transportation and a fine of one thousand rupees. Before the sentence was pronounced, the

accused, in reply to the question if he had anything to say, spoke those memorable words which bring out the high patriotism which Mr. Davar affected to call a mere profession, and the calm endurance of a fate with the dignity of the great heroes of history :

"In spite of the verdict of the Jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things, and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by remaining free."

Mr. Tilak was hurried away to Ahmedabad where he was lodged for some time till he was transferred to Mandalay by a benign Government which had commuted his transportation with simple imprisonment and remitted the fine of one thousand rupees. An application to reserve some points of law was rejected by the Judge, and successive applications to the Advocate-General and a Full Bench having proved equally abortive, it remained to be seen whether the Privy Council, the highest appellate tribunal, would interfere. For laying the case before the Privy Council, Mr. Khaparde went to England to carry his case to the Privy Council. But all his efforts and the expenses were to no effect, the Privy Council not finding sufficient reasons to admit the case.

Neither Coronations nor Delhi Durbars availed aught in the Mitigation of the punishment meted out to Mr. Tilak and he had to undergo the full term of imprisonment. No other event within our living memory created such a stir and upheaval of feeling as this conviction of Mr. Tilak. Mr. Tilak had, by his sufferings and absolute self-abnegation, so endeared himself to the

people that even the masses, who could little appreciate his great intellectual abilities, were deeply moved. The mill hands in Bombay who scarcely knew that Mr. Tilak was the author of the "Orien" struck work when they heard of the conviction, thus testifying the esteem and reverence in which the people had held him. Meetings of sympathy were held in thousands; all party feelings were forgotten and political leaders, who did not worship in the same temple with Mr. Tilak, *vied* with each other in placing on record their most emphatic opinion against the Government's action and in paying their tribute of admiration to the great patriot.

The hardest punishment that the Nemesis of fate could impose upon ordinary mortals is confinement in prison. An isolation of 6 years to a man of Mr. Tilak's unceasing activities and strenuous labour must have been both mentally and physically most depressing, if not, actually crushing. His iron will and his highly developed spiritual nature came to his rescue and sustained him through these dark days of pain and solitude. Even the sable cloud is not without its silver lining. Nature is a great monitor, and when people whose genius and temperament are suited to a particular line of activities stray from their natural orbit in pursuit of seemingly higher ends, it puts a ban on their self-chosen work and reverts them to their appointed task. Instead of being a humble worshipper of the Goddess of letters, Mr. Tilak had gone after strange Gods, and leisure in the shape of punishment was now given to him, so that he might work in his native element and produce another work of enduring value. The one book, that would give solace to a soul in trouble, is Bhagavat Gita, and Mr. Tilak was devoting his time in prison to a study of this great book. His subtle intellect would

not tamely accept the interpretations put upon the teachings in Gita by other original thinkers, and Mr. Tilak had his own views to offer. Being an erudite and intelligent student of both Eastern and Western Ethics, Mr. Tilak has had the great privilege of comparing notes between the two, and his Gita Rahasya is one of the most remarkable books on the philosophy of the conduct of life. It has, as may be expected, given rise to a host of criticisms and has been diversely commented by different schools of thought. But that it is a real contribution to the world of thought no one can deny. It has had a most surprisingly large sale and is being translated from Marathi into other languages.

The return of Mr. Tilak into his beloved Motherland in 1914 found him again the Pilot of the storm-tossed and weather-beaten Indian Nation. He found himself face to face with quite a new state of affairs. The great war, into which Britain plunged to champion the cause and integrity of small nations which had created new aspirations among this nation also, was still in progress. A new angle of vision had opened before the people's eye, an immense vista of brilliant possibilities. The so-called Moderate and Extremist parties had become merged in one party wedded to obtain a position of honour for India among the nations of the world. The gospel of Home Rule on which the Congress split at Surat has become the accepted creed of the whole nation. This was the psychological moment for the nation to bestir itself for the achievement of its long deferred position. Having found it, Mr. Tilak threw himself heart and soul into the Home Rule movement. The , '*Mahratta*' ' and the "*Kesari*" had begun their propagandist work in right earnest. Home Rule Leagues were formed ;

mass meetings were organised; and Mr. Tilak delivered a series of lectures on Home Rule. This new activity had naturally roused the too sensitive imagination of the Bureaucracy which espied a mighty danger to their vested interests. A fine occasion was sought for inaugurating a new compaign of repression. Mr. Tilak completed his sixtieth birthday on the 23rd July 1916 which was observed as a day of national rejoicing, and in appreciation of the sufferings and services of the Great Tribune, the people presented him with a purse containing a lakh of rupees, and the counter demonstration came from the Government who asked Mr. Tilak to show cause why he should not be bound down for good conduct for one year on a security of Rs. 10,000 and two personal sureties for Rs. 40,000, having regard to his three speeches on Home Rule delivered at Ahmadnagar and Belgaum. The Presidency Magistrate having condemned the speeches as seditious, Mr. Tilak complied with the Magistrate's order. But on appeal, the High Court of Bombay presided over by Justices Bachelor and Shaw unanimously quashed the Magistrate's order, holding that the speeches were innocuous breathing nothing but loyalty to the Empire and fervent love for. This is the first occasion in which justice was done to Mr. Tilak, showing that the jealous Goddess of liberty, exacting and cruel though she is towards her votaries, does not forget them entirely. The judgment in the Tai Maharaj case, completely exonerating Mr. Tilak from any faint of guilt and paying a high tribute to his sterling character, is another great event in Mr. Tilak's life which has greatly raised him even in the estimation of his political foes. Mr. Tilak played a leading part in the United

Congress at Lucknow and is now in the forefront as their acknowledged leader of those working for Home Rule. The forces of reaction are vigilant attempting to circumscribe his activities. But an experienced pilot that Mr. Tilak is, the Nation has the fullest confidence in him that he will steer it safe to its haven of Self-Government within the Empire.

The immense influence which Mr. Tilak exercises over his people and over men in other parts of the country has been built by many contributing factors. He is, among Indian political reformers, the least touched by the glamour of western civilisation. He would confess that English education has done much for us, but that does not amount to the adoption of customs which are not necessary for the well-being of the land but are merely an imitation lacking independence of thought. The common people of Maharashtra look upon him as a very God who has come to live in the Kaliyuga among the sons of men. Simple in dress and speech, accessible even to the most lowly, and yet withal one of the greatest scholars of the land or even of the world, he has struck the imagination of his countrymen more than any other worker for the general good.

He does not treat political subjects with the glow and religious fervour of Bengal nationalists who have practically created in India the Gospel of Nationalism. He, like the men of his race, has a practical shrewdness of judgment which is more formidable to opponent than the high-flown periods and grand emotions of other workers in the fields. Disregard of self is the most distinctive feature of his character, and it is this, as Mr. Nevinson remarks, which has made extremism the loveable thing it is to many ardent men. The calmness

of mind and elasticity of spirit that he possesses, has brought him out of the most painful circumstances, and, in spite of opposition and misrepresentation, he has maintained his hold upon the people, a hold which is to-day more powerful than it ever has been, and which would be remembered in the political history of India, not as merely the result of the deliberate work of a clever mind but as the response to those feelings in common human nature which are the deepest and the most ennobling.

A shrewed judge of the planetary conditions of the world's politics, Mr. Tilak realised along with his other compatriots that the psychological moment of the destinies of the British Empire in relation to its components had arrived and that a supreme effort should be made to make England realise how invaluable an asset would India be to the empire were she taken into confidence and treated as an equal hence the necessity of an Indian deputation to England for enlightening British public opinion. For raising funds for this purpose Mr. Tilak has carried out a huge propagandist work by preaching the Gospel of Home Rule to every home in the Maharastra. The success which has attended his efforts is phenomenal, money having poured in by thousands one place vieing with another in the largeness of its contributions. No prince or a victorious general could have aroused so much enthusiasm or would have been so lovingly welcomed or honored.

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